

# Hey! A Christian Can't Do That!

Romans 14:1-23

**The following is a sermon outline:**

## **A. We have spent our time talking about the vertical grace that comes from God to us.**

1. Today, we will begin talking about the horizontal grace that we should have with each other.
2. God demonstrated His love to us by sending Jesus to die for us by His grace, even when we were still sinners. (Romans 5:8)
  - a. We can't pay Him back.
  - b. We didn't deserve it
3. Paul tells us in Ephesians that we are to treat others the same way God has treated us.

## **B. It all really comes down to our attitude.**

*Illustration: Both the hummingbird and the vulture fly over our nation's deserts. All vultures see is rotting meat, because that is what they look for. They thrive on that diet. But hummingbirds ignore the smelly flesh of dead animals. Instead, they look for the colorful blossoms of desert plants. The vultures live on what was. They live on the past. They fill themselves with what is dead and gone. But hummingbirds live on what is. They seek new life. They fill themselves with freshness and life. Each bird finds what it is looking for. We all do.*

*Illustration: Viktor Frankl, concentration camp survivor, said, "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: To choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's way."*

### **1. Christians should live free from guilt.**

- a. Not freedom from the guilt caused by the Holy Spirit when we sin.
- b. Freedom from the guilt we push on others when they don't live up to our expectations and exacting demands

### **2. How are you at demonstrating grace?**

- a. Do you push people into guilt?
- b. Do you promote liberty or do you restrain it?

## **I. TWO STRONG TENDENCIES THAT NULLIFY GRACE**

### ***Romans 12:9-17***

*Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.*

*Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

**This is the essence of the Christian way of life—the Christian’s attitude!**

Why can’t we live like this? Because of the following tendencies:

### **A. The tendency to COMPARE**

1. We prefer sameness, predictability, and common interests.
  - a. Unfortunately, we base this on externals.
  - b. Our attitudes prevent us from seeing the big picture.
2. God never intended for all of His children to be the same.
  - a. God is not up there producing “cookie-cutter,” “paper-doll” Christians!
  - b. That’s not God’s work—that’s the work of man! (cf. 1 Corinthians 12)
3. Legalism requires that we all be alike, unified in convictions and uniform in appearance.
4. Grace finds pleasure in diversity, encourages individuality, and leaves room for differences of opinion.
5. Before we will be able to demonstrate the grace to let others be, we have to stop this legalistic tendency to COMPARE.

### **B. The tendency to CONTROL**

1. This is certainly hard for those who find security in religious rigidity.
2. People who control use manipulation through fear, threats and subtle hints to get their way
  - a. These people amount to nothing more than Christian bullies.
3. Controlling nullifies grace.
  - a. In order to exemplify the grace to let others be, we need to learn to let go—and let God!

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**Warning! You will hear truths revealed in Romans 14 that will go against everything in your human nature. Some of you will resist this with every ounce that is within you.**

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## **II. FIVE BIBLICAL GUIDELINES THAT MAGNIFY GRACE**

### **1. Accept Others (Romans 14:1-4)**

#### **Romans 14:1-4**

*Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.*

**A. Guideline #1: “Accepting others is basic to letting them be.**

**B. Today, our issues are NOT centered on whether or not to eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols; our issues are:**

Going to movies, wearing makeup, playing cards, going to live theater, watching certain TV shows, mixed swimming, having a quiet time every day, going to a restaurant that serves alcohol, wearing certain clothes, owning certain cars, living in nice homes, listening to certain music, drinking wine with a meal, dancing, having a certain job, wearing you hair a certain way, having fine and elegant possessions, getting a facelift, drinking coffee...etc.

*Illustration: There was a group of German pastors who came together for a conference several years ago. Part of their reception was the serving of beer. [In that culture, it is accepted to drink beer.] But one man lit up a cigar, and the place went up in smoke. [It was not accepted to smoke.]*

*Illustration: A man was a youth worker in an ethnic community many years ago. He showed the youth group a missionary film. The film projector hadn't been off an hour when the church leaders called him in and asked him if he'd showed the film. He said that he had. They said that they didn't like that. He recalled that they had showed slides at the last missionary conference. They said that if the pictures are still—fine. If they move—sin!*

**If you're willing to laugh at that one, why don't you laugh at yours?**

**C. The problem wasn't food; it was a love problem (an acceptance or attitude problem).**

- a. We make our love conditional.
- b. Look at the first part of verse 3.
- c. Now look at the second part of verse 3.

## D. What is acceptance?

*Illustration: Gladys M. Hunt wrote, "It means you are valuable just as you are. It allows you to be the real you. You aren't forced into someone else's idea of who you really are. It means your ideas are taken seriously since they reflect you. You can talk about how you feel inside and why you feel that way—and someone really cares. Acceptance means you can try out your ideas without being shot down. You can even express heretical thoughts and discuss them with intelligent questioning. You feel safe. No one will pronounce judgment on you, even though they don't agree with you. It doesn't mean you will never be corrected or shown to be wrong; it simply means it is safe to be you and no one will destroy you out of prejudice."*

## 2. Let Others Decide for Themselves (vv. 5-8)

### Romans 14:5-8

*One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*

**A. Guideline #2: "Refusing to dictate to others allows the Lord freedom to direct their lives."**

**B. Do we want to help others grow to maturity?**

- a. Let people be different.
- b. Stop trying to control and manipulate people into your idea of what a Christian is and should be.

*Illustration: In a "Peanuts" cartoon by Charles Schultz, Linus is alone watching TV. In storms Lucy who demands that he change the channel to what she wants to watch, threatening him with her fist if he refuses. "What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?" asks Linus. She blurts back, "These five fingers. Individually, they are nothing, but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they become a weapon that is terrible to behold." "Uhhh," says Linus, "which channel do you want to watch?" And then, turning away, he looks at his own fingers and says under his breath, "Why can't you guys get organized like that?"*

- There are Christian bullies.
- They want to manipulate.
- They are often very bright and have a real following.

C. “Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.” (v. 5)

**Romans 14:5**

*One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.*

- The world loves to see us as “brother bashers” and “sister smashers.”
- Let people make up their own minds

**4. Refuse to Judge Others (vv. 9-12)**

**Romans 14:9-12**

*For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

**A. Guideline #3: “Freeing others means we never assume a position we’re not qualified to fill.”**

**B. Why aren’t we qualified to judge?**

- a. We’re not omniscient...so we can’t read people’s hearts and motives.
- b. We’re finite...so we can’t see the big picture and know the whole story.
- c. We’re human...so we are imperfect, inconsistent, subjective

**Illustration:**

*In a Connecticut city, 53 residents of a certain neighborhood signed a petition to stop reckless driving on their streets. The police set a watch. A few nights later, they caught five violators. All five of them had signed the petition.*

- We cannot produce—we are inconsistent. So we are not qualified to judge.
- Of course, if there is a blatant breaking with Scripture, we need to take care of the problem. That’s not my subject...you know that!
- There is a place for discernment.

**C. Does this mean we are always to agree?**

- a. Certainly not! But we should be civil in our conflicts.

## 5. Express Your Liberty Wisely (vv. 13-18)

### **Romans 14:13-18**

*Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.*

1. **Guideline #4: “Loving others requires us to express our liberty wisely.”**
2. **Love must be the ruling authority in our expression of liberty.**
  - We are to live in freedom to please God—not others!
  - We shall answer to Christ—not others (v. 10)

### **Romans 14:10**

*But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*

3. **We need to act out our lives and the way we do things because of our love for each other in serving Christ, knowing that we will have to answer to what He says—not what others think and say!**
4. **Chuck Swindoll paraphrase of these verses:**

*“Nothing that is not specifically designated as evil in Scripture is evil, but rather a matter of one’s personal preference or taste. So let it be. Even if you personally would not do what another is doing, let it be. And you who feel the freedom to do so, don’t flaunt it, or mock those who disagree. We are in the construction business—not destruction. And let’s all remember that God’s big-picture kingdom plan is not being shaped by small things like what one person prefers over another, but by large things like righteousness and peace and joy.”*

5. **Enjoy your liberty without flaunting it...**
  - a. Do it wisely, quietly, privately and with those of like mind.

## Conclusion

### 1. Review of the tendencies that nullify grace:

- a. The tendency to compare
- b. The tendency to control.

### 2. Review of guidelines to magnifying grace:

- a. Accepting others is basic to letting them be
- b. Refusing to dictate to others allows the Lord freedom to direct their lives.
- c. Freeing others means we never assume a position we're not qualified to fill.
- d. Loving others requires us to express out liberty wisely.

### 3. A Few Actions That Signify Grace (v. 19)

#### **Romans 14:19**

*Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*

### 4. Pursue things that encourage peace and assist other's growth.

- a. Filter whatever you do through this twofold grid
  - Is this going to encourage peace?
  - Is this going to hurt and offend or help and strengthen?

### 5. Remember that sabotaging saints hurts the work of God. (v. 20)

#### **Romans 14:20**

*For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.*

- a. You sabotage the saints when you flaunt your liberty, knowing that others have convictions against it.

### 6. Exercise you liberty only with those who can enjoy it with you.

- a. Restraining because of love.

### 7. Determine where you stand and refuse to play God in anyone else's life.

- a. By letting others be, you free up yourself to give full attention to what God is trying to make of you.

*Note: When you're totally absorbed with that, you won't have the time or energy to hold on to someone else's life.*

**8. Romans 14 is not a chapter about issues central to the faith! -----** It is about peripheral things like meat sacrificed to idols and the observance of religious days.

a. Paul's point is that these peripheral issues shouldn't cause division.

The body of Christ should have unity AND diversity.

b. It should not only incorporate a diversity of gifts (1 Cor. 12), but it should tolerate a diversity of opinions (Rom. 14).

**9. Why don't we all pray for this horizontal grace to change our attitudes?**

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*Dear Father, for those who would wish to go too far with liberty, the restraint of love is hard to hear. For those whose lives are marked by lists, the expression of any freedom is hard to hear...even harder to see. Let us all know that we answer to You and You alone. Make us understand that we should strive for unity in matters of faith, grace in matters of opinion, and love in all things! Lord, soften our hearts today. Lead us to confess our tendencies to compare and control. Make us live by the guidelines that magnify grace in our relationships with one another.*

*Teach us that accepting others is basic to letting them be. Give us power to refuse to dictate to others, allowing You freedom to direct their lives. Allow us to understand that freeing others means we never assume a position we're not qualified to fill. Finally Father, make us understand that loving others requires us to express our liberty wisely. We do not deserve the grace we have received. Let us treat others with that same grace—even when we don't believe they deserve it. Touch our hearts right now, God. Bring us to you for healing today. In the majestic and gracious name of Jesus I pray, AMEN.*